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CHAPTER III

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Children are important to the Cayapa and are welcomed because it is essential that a man or a woman have children who can perform a bodi or memorial feast for the deceased parent(s) several years after death. The spirit of the dead parent would be unhappy and vexed, if this were not done. In addition, as we have discussed, the family is economically important. There is ample motivation for the Cayapa to begin a family and a variety of methods are available.

> When a young man or a young woman desires to marry a certain person, all work other than that absolutely necessary, and all social relations with other individuals, are at an end. Such a person sits throughout the day without speaking to anyone, and no matter how much he or she may be addressed or made fun of, etiquette does not permit such a person to respond or even to laugh. . . A young swain then bides his time until the other members of his family have retired for the night, when he takes his canoe and paddles to a point near the house of the young woman he wishes to marry. On nearing her home he sings softly certain magic love-songs and then cautiously approaches the house. He then, according to some informants, attracts her attention by one

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means or another and endeavors to persuade her to leave the house with him for a time. According to others, he cautiously enters the house and passes a part of the night with her under her own mosquito canopy . . . These visits are repeated for some time, when the young couple announce their desire to marry and obtain the consent of their respective parents (Barrett 1925:321).

In 1959-60, in the Cayapa area generally, and particularly in the Punta Venado region, the custom of remaining sitting in silence was apparently no longer in vogue, except during the actual wedding celebration, when the groom does indeed sit off to one side in silence. However, the technique of nightly visitation is still a culturally approved method, but only one of several.

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Stealing a Woman. Some men prefer to "steal a woman" for wife. This is called /súpu tayahímu/, /súpu/ "woman" and /tímu/ "to steal." Lorenzo Martín, commonly called /pičendá/, "a kind of crested bird" [a nick name he detested], preferred this approach to marriage. According to him, he met his first wife while canoeing along the river. They were both alone, and after some minutes of conversation, he proposed

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and she agreed. Now, with a new wife, neither he nor his mother-in-law wanted to live under the same roof. Feelings of anger and/or disapproval on the part of parents and kin of the dead spouse to the remarriage of the surviving spouse are not uncommon among the Cayapa. There is some feeling that the death may have been caused by the survivor.

An interesting point emerges that is part of a general Cayapa theme: Lorenzo waited about five years before remarrying, and apparently the motivation lay not so much in his sexual needs, as in his appetite for food. His mother-in-law was not preparing his meals properly. It should be kept in mind that, by Cayapa standards, a man who is capable of /sipu tayshimu/,[1] who can actually walk up to a woman and propose to her, is deserving of envy, awe, and admiration. This means that such a man is sexually forward and aggressive. Many, if not most, Cayapa men are very hesitant and uncertain about sex and marriage. While chastity is not particularly valued, men in their twenties who claim to have had no sexual intercourse are not uncommon. Women, on the other hand, lose their virginity much

[1] [i.e. "to steal a woman" - ANALYST]

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earlier by way of the custom of night courtship described above. These affairs need not end in marriage, and both parties are free to seek greener pastures. It is the decided impression of the writer that the Cayapa women are the sexual initiators generally and that they are visited by a comparatively small number of sexual activists among the men.

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Arranged Marriages. Most men do not have the brashness of character required to steal a woman, and many are not able to carry through a successful night courtship. For them, therefore an arranged marriage is necessary. One way of arranging a marriage is for the father of a young man or woman to ask one of the tribal officials to find a spouse for his offspring. If the official does not know of anyone immediately available, he will make inquiries at whatever fiesta he happens to attend. There is no charge for this service.

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This sort of match-making was attempted unsuccessfully at a fiesta that I attended at Sapallo Grande in 1960. The fiesta was a combined affair, honoring the dead and celebrating a recent marriage.

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of the case were clear, and a witness was present. It is of interest that Pablo's wife seems to have convinced everyone of her innocence in the affair and that she had been truly hoodwinked. Chapiro's reputation was of course, well known, and guilt was held to be his alone. Even though justice prevailed, Chapiro was disgruntled and left without drinking. This in itself would be sufficient to mark him as a deviant, for Basurco's observations are still very much applicable.

> . . . leur seul vice est de rendre un culte trop fréquent à Bacchus, auquel ils font des libations d'ichcala ou eau-de-vie de canne, qu'ils fabriquent eux-mêmes . . . (Basurco 1894:406).

In marked contrast to many Cayapa men, Chapiro has always been more interested in sexual pursuits than in drinking and the married men in the area were beginning to view him as a real threat. In instances like this it is felt that the best way to remove the threat is to marry him off, forcibly, if need be. In the case of Chapiro events came to a head after he had seduced Gabriel's daughter.

The Seduction of Gabriel's daughter. Chapiro was

4:Altschuler E-5 (1959-1960) 1965
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in love with Gabriel's daughter, but she was in love with someone else. One dark night, Chapiro sneaked into the house and made love to the girl by pretending to be her lover. Later, they stole out of the house to go to his home. When the girl saw that the house was Chapiro's, she realized that she had been tricked, but she spent the night with him anyway. The next day, while he was doing some work outside, she returned to her home. Her father was very angry. Gabriel, together with his son and his /máŋgo ná.tala/, Camilio Pianchichi, and Domingo Cimarrón went to Chapiro's house. They told him to come to Gabriel's house, but he refused to do so. Camilio took Chapiro's pressure lantern for no reason except that it was valuable, and they all left. Chapiro finally went to Gabriel's house. Gabriel was drunk and he roughly ordered Chapiro into the house. Furious words passed between them, and Chapiro said that if he were punished, he would take Gabriel's daughter again. At this three men grabbed him and took him outside where he was given sixty lashes. After the punishment, everyone began drinking, but the still-angry Chapiro left early.

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